

# **Report to the Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Report reference: AMED-006-2018/19**

**Date of meeting: 17 January 2019**

**Portfolio: Commercial and Regulatory Services**

**Subject: Economic Development Report**

**Responsible Officer: Mike Warr (01992 564472)**

**Democratic Services: Jackie Leither (01992 564756)**

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## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**(1) To note the progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section and provide feedback if Members wish;**

## **Executive Summary:**

This report updates the Cabinet Committee on a number of projects, themes and issues being explored by the Economic Development Team.

## **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To appraise the Committee on progress made with regard to Economic Development issues.

## **Other Options for Action:**

None, as this monitoring report is for information not action.

## **Report:**

### **1. Digital Innovation Zone**

The Economic Development team recently organised, on behalf of the Essex & Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ), a highly successful Smart Places Seminar on the subject of future-proofing new garden communities. This event was held at Chesterford Research Park and sponsored by Uttlesford District Council and attracted around 70 delegates representing eight local authorities and a number of voluntary community groups, health and education organisations plus local businesses and national organisations.

Several high level speakers were secured for the seminar, ranging from a global innovation foundation, health, care and digital infrastructure providers, plus a private sector consultancy and presentations from officers delivering the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town community. A conference report will be produced setting out the conclusions of the event and these will also be incorporated in a new section of the DIZ Digital Innovation Strategy dealing specifically with garden communities. Officers are already preparing the next smart places seminar which will be hosted in East Herts, exploring issues around digital inclusion and the potential impact of moving to new digital platforms for public service delivery.

Officers are currently working with colleagues at Essex County Council on a multi-million pound bid to the DCMS Local Full Fibre Network programme, to boost connectivity in areas across the DIZ from hubs based at GP surgeries. This bid has already successfully navigated the initial government stages and is now being developed in detail for consideration by the DCMS investment panel. The DIZ board has also begun work on preparation of a bid for the anticipated DCMS Rural Connected Communities Programme. It is anticipated that this fund will result in a multi-million pound national funding programme being allocated to two, or possibly three, local areas. Elected Members from the DIZ have already met officers from DCMS to explore how the DIZ might compete effectively for this significant 5G testbed funding.

## **2. Tourism and Visitor Economy**

As agreed at the Tourism and Visitor conference held in October which was attended by over 70 delegates, officers have convened a meeting of the five district councils between London and Cambridge to begin work on a co-ordinated and jointly led tourism strategy and the establishment of a new cross border organisation to lead and promote work locally.

## **3. Skills Board**

Officers have had a series of meetings with the new management team of Epping Forest College and New City College, to ensure that leadership of the skills board will be retained by the college principal. New City College have agreed on the importance of this work and have committed to take it forward.

## **4. Economic Development Strategy**

Following officer moves within the council a presentation was made to leadership team to agree an approach to enable additional capacity to be reinvested in delivering the Economic Strategy. A new target for completion of the strategy has been agreed for May 2019. It has also been agreed to establish a cross-departmental working group to support this work under the chairmanship of the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships.

## **5. Green Arc**

Council officers are working closely with the Corporation of London and other external partners to support joint work on strategic green infrastructure opportunities and funds. The new green infrastructure group is being established under the leadership of Cllr Nigel Bedford, with the support of the Corporation of London and Officers are working to set up the new steering group early in the 2019. A review of current external funding opportunities for green infrastructure is also being undertaken.

## **6. Chairman's Business Networking Event**

Economic Development Officers worked closely with the Chairman of Council to organise the Chairman's first business networking event. This event was hosted on the 29th November and in excess of 50 local businesses and schools attended. The event was themed around celebrating the contribution of local business to the life of the district, building closer relationships with employers and schools and providing an opportunity for business to business contact in the district. The costs of the event were met with sponsorship and together with the raffle this enabled over £1000 to be raised for the Chairman's Charities, including Epping Forest Community Transport. Feedback from businesses and partners was very positive with businesses asking for the event to become an annual part of the district calendar or if possible, to be hosted more frequently. The event couldn't have gone ahead without the support of our own Youth Councillors and local charities who were instrumental in the evening's activity.

**Resource Implications:**

None as this is a progress report.

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

None as this is a progress report.

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

None as this is a progress report.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

None as this is a progress report.

**Background Papers:**

None

**Risk Management:**

N/A

**Equality Analysis:**

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided at Appendix 1 to the report.